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Early history and its changes. The territory which forms the county  
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the settlers saw all that a new frontier had furnished. At that time  
first actual settlements were made consisting of those families who settled  
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valleys.

## HISTORY AND ADVANTAGES OF PLYMOUTH COUNTY, IOWA

The first settlement in the county was dated June 10, 1856. The  
first settlers were a family of four persons who had been  
settling in the north and were here for the convenience of their  
business part of a town was built.  
With the growth of Iowa as welcome to the pioneer (and which has not  
lost any of its charm in the past half-century) who had found through  
the hardships and sufferings of that miserable long and weary trail of  
1846 and 1849, came to the land was really little settlement, now just  
minutes of a town along and about. After business with a few  
days more settlement was then commenced.  
The first settlement along the Big River was made by some business men





County history and its advantages. The territory which forms this county was originally a part of Buchanan and Fayette counties. It was set off and established as Plymouth county in 1851 and was given this name in honor of the landing place of the pioneers of New England. But it was not until the summer and autumn of 1856, forty three years ago when this section was all that a wise creator had fashioned it, that the first actual settlements were made consisting of three families who settled in the Floyd river valley and a family of Swiss people in the Big Sioux valley. These settlements were made simultaneously, followed a little later on by four other families settling in the Floyd river valley district.

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The first mortgage granted in the county was dated June 10<sup>th</sup> 1856. The amount covered was \$ 280.- secured by lands. The first deed recorded bears date July 24<sup>th</sup> 1856 and was given for the consideration of \$ 600. on the undivided part of a twenty six acre lot.

With the opening of spring so welcome to the pioneer (and which has not lost any of its charms in the past half century) who had passed through the privations and sufferings of that memorable long and severe winter of 1856 and 1857, came to the Floyd river valley little settlement nine persons members of a German colony and about fifteen Americans with a few others whose settlement was not permanent.

The next settlement along the Big Sioux was made by nine Americans





and Germans who had come to aid in cultivating and make homes on these broad and fertile lands.

With all the disadvantages and sorrows attendant upon the first steps of civilization, the adversities to be encountered these pioneers seemingly led a happy life. The absence of aristocratic display and of domineering spirits which to day is so apparent must have been a source of comfort to them. Their merit alone insured equality. The brotherhood of man was exemplified in a sincere and practical way. Hospitality and kindness was not considered so much a christian trait as a duty to humanity, to ask a favor was to receive. The sorrows of one household became the grief of all, and the joy of one was but the gladness to all within the limits of these little settlements.

During the summer of 1857 a town site company composed of some eight persons staked off a village plat of 240 acres about four miles from present county seat and named the same Plymouth intending at the opportune time to secure the location of the county seat there. About half a mile below this another plat was laid off by two parties from Sioux City which was named Junction. These parties thinking this point would become the junction of two railroad lines corresponding to the Chicago & Northwestern and Dubuque and Sioux City land grants. At the same time what was known as the Western Land and Town Lot Company laid out a large tract of land near the west line of county also designed to be the county





seat. This tract was about twenty five miles from present seat. The spring of 1858 found several more new comers seeking homes in this fair domain.

At this time the county was yet a part of Woodbury county and these settlers had to go to Sioux City to exercise the right of franchise, pay taxes etc. This inconvenience soon brought about the organization of Plymouth county. It was at first made into two precincts, Plymouth and Westfield Civil Townships. These two civil subdivisions constituting the entire territory known as Plymouth county.

W. Van O'Linda was elected the first county judge, A. L. Sheets, clerk and surveyor with their offices distant about twenty miles from present county seat and near south west line of county. J. J. Martin, treasurer and D. M. Miller, sheriff with their offices about as far apart as the judge and clerk from county seat. It is evident that the few voters believed in having these offices widely separated. But a short time elapsed when the tax payers became convinced that a seat of justice and a place for county offices must be had. Accordingly two men were chosen to make a selection who reported to the judge in October 1859 the selection of a village called Melbourne (now defunct) about eight miles from the new county seat.

About a year later a court house was there erected costing the county \$2,000. Prior to this the county court was held at the judges residence. The first county warrant issued by authority of Plymouth county was dated April 6. 1859 drawn in favor of W. W. Miller & Co of Des Moines





in consideration of \$ 342. worth of blank books etc, made for the county. This warrant was signed by the county judge.

Early in 1859 a plantation corn mill propelled by wind power was put into operation, this being the first attempt at making flour or feed in the county. It served its good purposes until December 1868 when a water mill was erected on the Floyd river at a place named Hinton.

During the fall of 1859 the first murder occurred, E. D. Brookings killing a man by name of Rooney, for what reason is not stated.

The first introduction of the gospel was July 5. 1859 by a minister of the German Evangelical Church. This public worship was held at a private residence and was continued at different private houses until 1866. when a chapel was erected and dedicated.

In November 1859 a United Presbyterian minister held services at the county judges residence.

The first public school was taught by W. Van O'Linda, at Melbourne in December 1859.

In 1860 D. M. Mills one among the first settlers in the Big Sioux valley and the only settler who remained in the valley during the Indian scare raised and threshed the first wheat grown in the county. This wheat was threshed out by horses treading around in a circle.

During 1860 G. M. E. Sherwin (afterwards county judge of Cherokee county) was awarded the contract of taking Brookings the murderer (who was in jail at Sioux City) to the penitentiary at Fort Madison. With no



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railroad facilities it was a long and unpleasant undertaking. For this service he was to receive \$250. in county warrants worth at that time about twenty five per cent of their face value. Through carelessness the prisoner escaped and was never recaptured. \$700. in warrants were paid to the person in Woodbury county who had charge of and for boarding this prisoner. So it will be observed that criminal prosecutions cost the people considerable even in pioneer days.

The first marriage license granted was December 15<sup>th</sup> 1860.

In 1861 the board of supervisors consisted of four persons who met the first week in January. Their first official act was to purchase a stove for the court house at \$67. which was paid for in county warrants. At this session a waif of poverty and financial embarrassment came from the board in this language. Whereas the present condition of Plymouth county is deplorably embarrassing, with resources so limited that it is impossible to conduct the affairs of the county even on the most economical scale unless some speedy and efficient relief is obtained. Be it resolved, therefore, That the county judge use all legal means from time to time to secure a better financial standing. Again. That the citizens of the county suggest any means that may occur to them to bring about the desired end.

The school fund for this year was \$470. the total number of pupils is  
The assessed valuation of property was. lands 44.170 acres \$136.100.





Town lots 2350. \$ 7.503. personal \$ 6.023. Tax levy for all purposes 7 1/2 mills.

In 1862 the first post office was established and went into operation at Melbourne. In a few months afterwards the postmaster A. C. Sheetz (and who put into operation the plantation corn mill) removed to a farm and no successor was appointed to take his place.

Early in the autumn of 1862 frightful outrages had been committed by the Sioux Indians at Spirit Lake Iowa, and New Ulm Minn, which caused intense alarm among the settlers. Word spread rapidly from one settlement to another until all the settlers along the Floyd and Big Sioux valleys and adjoining country fled panic stricken and in the wildest confusion. This trouble only lasted a few days when the wandering settlers commenced returning, although there were some who sought more congenial locations, but the results were demoralizing and the loss of property to many was large in those early days.

In 1863 the supervisory board was composed of three members and at their October session ordered the clerk to take the necessary means and put a stop to the court house rooms being used as a warehouse for the storage of corn, grain and other farm produce as had been allowed, in the past.

The assessment for this year was upon 48,594 acres of land valued at \$ 2.00 per acre amounting to \$ 97,188. Town lots \$ 438. personal property





\$ 4.150. Total \$ 101.773. Tax levy 7 mills. The number of persons subject to military duty was all told 16.

In 1864 on account of the poor condition of the court house the board of three supervisors met at the residence of clerk. The county was hopelessly in debt and the board moved to levy a special tax to clear up the indebtedness. The proposition was submitted to the people June 1<sup>st</sup> 1864. The returns showed 15 votes for and 9 against. At the same election a vote was taken to sell the swamp lands for \$ 2.000. which vote stood 13 for and 12 against the measure. At the September meeting the member from Westfield civil township was absent. He was cited to represent his township or deliver up the books of same. He appeared before the board and informed them that owing to the hard times his township had become depopulated and he himself had been compelled to remove to other parts in order to provide for his family. He surrendered the effects of his office.

In August 1864 took place the first grasshopper raid known to white men in this section. Their advent was heralded by a noise resembling the approach of a violent storm.

In 1865 a new impetus was given to immigration by the passage of the "Homestead Act" which granted free homes to actual settlers. The multitudes of men coming and going did not cease until every acre of this magnificent government land had been taken and settled upon.

The board of two supervisors at their February meeting (and which up to this time, the records which are well preserved had been written with a quill pen



by men whose penmanship would put to blush many an official of more recent date) ordered an election whether or not the county should pay \$300. to men who would volunteer to enter the army. The returns were in its favor.

Owing to the depopulation, the territory embraced in Westfield civil township was set back into Plymouth and Lincoln townships. The tax levy this year was state 2 mills: county 4 mills: school 1 mill: special tax 10 mills: soldiers tax 20 mills and bounty tax 5 mills, total 42 mills.

In 1866 two members composed the board of supervisors. Their minutes show a bill paid for subscription to the "Iowa Homestead" Des Moines \$2.50. The sheriff was paid a salary of \$18.00 for his years services and was glad to get even that amount. The tax levy was placed at 18 1/2 mills. The school lands were opened up for actual settlement at \$1.50 per acre. The board of 1867 was composed of two members and one at large. They ordered the court house to be repaired and put in order by the time court would convene. In July application was made to rent part of the court house for a grocery store. This was granted by the board for one year free of charge. The tax levy for this year 19 1/2 mills of which for the first time a bridge tax of 1 mill was ordered. At their September meeting the board created the civil townships of America and Sioux.

In 1868 the board was composed of five members. The superintendent of schools was allowed a compensation of \$10.00 for his years work. It





was this board that sent long resolutions to the state legislature asking them not to grant any change made in the survey of 1858 through Plymouth county by the old Dubuque and Sioux City railroad line. The valuation of property was fixed at, lands \$ 107,265, town lots \$ 100, personal property \$ 26,400, total \$ 134,134.

In 1869 the principal order of business by the board was letting contracts for bridge building and establishing public highways. The property valuation was lands \$ 182,994, personal property \$ 28,343, tax levy 13 mills.

The advent of the Iowa Falls and Sioux City (now Illinois Central) railroad marked another important epoch in the settlement of the county. This opened up new markets with the outside world by the iron highway and telegraph lines.

The board of 1870 was composed of three members. They created the civil townships of Johnson, Stanton, Elgin and Perry. The assessed valuation this year was lands \$ 271,274, personal property \$ 59,707, tax levy 11 1/2 mills.

June 4<sup>th</sup> 1870 LeMars was platted by John D. Blair of the Dubuque and Sioux City railroad but was not named until the month of September following. At that time John D. Blair with other railroad officials, their families and friends came by special train and named the town by letting the ladies write the initials of their names and then so arrange them as to produce a name befitting. After considerable combination work the letters were so arranged as to produce the pretty and novel word LeMars. With a name emanating from such a source it is no wonder that happy homes and prosperity have come to its people.





In 1871, the civil township of Washington was created.

February 3, 1871 the first attempt at journalism was made by the founding and issue of the "LeMars Sentinel". During the same year appeared the "Press, Liberator".

In 1872, at the September meeting of the board three superintendents it was determined that Melbourne was no longer a proper location for the county offices. A proposition was made by the LeMars people for its removal, and the question was submitted to a vote of the people.

In January 1873 at their meeting the board canvassed the vote on removal of county seat, and found that 587 votes were cast for removal and 111 against it. The proposition made by two citizens of LeMars to erect a building to be used two years for county offices was accepted and the removal was made to same in April 1873.

The board deeming it important, offered a premium of \$500. to any person who should discover a paying coal mine within the limits of the county.

The board of 1874 was composed of four members. This was the year of the fearful and wonderfully destroying plague of the grasshopper which in armies of multiplied millions devastated this and other northwestern and central counties. It is said the enormity of the civil war can never be fully described, so it may be said of the grasshopper plague. They were too great an army for man to cope with, with all his ingenuity, strategy and strength they took the fields, destroyed all they found and moved on undismayed.



This work brought gloom, sadness and poverty upon hundreds, Owing to the failure and destruction of crops, relief was sought by the people in way of grain, seed etc. A memorial was sent to the legislature by this board and many of the taxes were by the authority of the superiors remitted. This invasion of grasshoppers continued more or less until 1819. Grain after train of cars were stopped on the rails by these pests in 1816. There are men and women of to day who do not forget the terrible times of those years, nor will it ever be blotted from memory the generous contributions of money etc. received alike from friends and strangers from all over this wide domain.

This board also voted to appropriate \$ 3,000. to erect a court house and jail on lots donated the county for this purpose, by the Iowa, Galle Iron Co. and Land Company.

In 1815, the board increased the premium offered on discovery of paying coal lands to \$ 1,000. They also placed the assessed valuation on lands, town lots and personal property at \$ 2,052,400. from which an exemption was made on account of trees growing of \$ 45,000. The tax levy was 13 mills.

In 1817, the board composed of five members (under enactment by the legislature) made an appropriation of \$ 250. in favor of the Plymouth county agricultural society.

The board of 1818 fixed the tax levy at 15 1/2 mills. They also reorganized the civil township of Westfield.





From 1878 until 1884 nothing transpired of importance when in the latter year the board further increased the premium on a paying coal discovery to \$5,000. to be void after two years time.

In 1882, the newspaper Democrat, was founded, and October 3, 1884 "The Globe" and "The Herald" a german paper were founded.

In 1885, the board of supervisors voted an appropriation to erect a large brick addition to the court house for vault and office purposes.

In 1889, the board voted to submit the question to the people for the erection of a jail. It carried by 147 majority although the year previous the proposition was defeated by 1316 votes. The board of 1890 awarded the contract for this building at \$11,000.

The appended table will show a little political history of the county, taking only the highest number of votes cast at elections for years named,

1858.	Governor	-	-	-	29	
1859	Governor of State	S. J. Kirkwood	24	A. C. Dodge	11	
1860	President W. S.	A. Lincoln	32	S. A. Douglas	6	
1861	Surveyor	-	39	-	-	-
1862	District clerk	-	8	-	-	-
1863	Governor of State	M. M. Stone	22	J. M. Little	5	
1864	President W. S.	A. Lincoln	19	Geo. B. McCallan	0	
1865	Governor of State	M. M. Stone	23	-	-	-
1866	County clerk	-	27	-	-	-
1867	Governor of State	S. Merrill	50	C. Mason	5	
1868	President W. S.	W. S. Grant	95	H. Sumner	23	
1869	Governor of State	S. Merrill	96	-	-	-
1870	County clerk	-	335			





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From this time on the number of votes rapidly increased when in 1880 there was cast for President of the United States, James A. Garfield 884 votes and for W. B. Hancock 756

The first record of population reported for the county was in 1860, when there was but 148 people, in 1870, 2,199, in 1880, 8,566, five years later it had increased to 15,374.



The county is now composed of twenty four government townships being the second largest in the state embracing 840 square miles or 536,617 acres of land that cannot be excelled any where in this great commonwealth. It lies along the west line of the state, the third county from the northern boundary, bounded on the north by Sioux county, on the south by Woodbury county, on the east by Cherokee county, and on the west by South Dakota. The surface is made up of rolling prairie diversified by domestic groves of trees, set out by the thoughtful early settlers and greatly increased by those who have come after them. The soil and subsoil is of a peculiar character in that it absorbs and retains moisture in such a way that wonderfully tempers it for withstanding either severe drouth or excessive rainfall. There is practically no waste land.

The soil is not surpassed for the vigorous growth of grain, grasses, fruit and stock and is of such a character as to comparatively preclude the necessity for expending money in drainage.

There is but a small area of natural timber compared with many other counties but the planting of trees has steadily progressed adding beauty to the landscape every where and furnishing shelter and wood for all practical purposes. Water pure and unexcelled and in quantity to meet all necessities. No coal mines, yet nearness to other markets supplies cheap fuel. No building stone, but a sand of superior quality for the manufacture of glass. Roads better than usually found in a prairie country made so by the generally rolling surface. Streams well bridged and kept so. There is no county or bonded debt, but a surplus





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in the treasury of about, \$ 36,000. This fact alone shows the care and intelligent management of affairs of its people and for the welfare of its people. No exorbitant taxes as compared with many others.

Railroad and market facilities are of the best there being five since that have stations within the county, Illinois Central, Chicago St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha, Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul, Chicago and Northwestern and the Sioux City and Northern.

There are thirteen banks in the county and evidence of the prosperity of our people is shown through them from the fact at this writing they have to their credit on deposit \$ 2,000,000.

The assessed valuation of property is, real \$ 4,910,709; personal \$ 813,075; railroad, \$ 511,777; total \$ 6,235,561, an increase in less than a quarter of a century of over \$ 4,000,000. The net actual value at last assessment of real and personal property was \$ 23,896,648,-

That our farmers especially are growing wealthy as the years pass on and that prosperity has followed intelligent labor and skillful management, no better evidence can be submitted than the above figures.

Good lands have a value at \$ 30.00 to \$ 65.00 per acre

That a safeguard surrounds our people through the common school system, and that there is no limit for educational advantages these items are appended. There are in the county 175 school houses valued at \$ 143,675. There are of school age 1,955. Total number of scholars registered in the different schools 5,512. These are taught by male teachers 51, female 270, whose wages





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per month amount to \$11.429. The apparatus in these school houses is valued at \$12.020. and the number of volumes of books in their libraries is about 1,500. For beauty and shade and the valuable lessons learned by the child in their planting there are over 2,000 trees that adorn the grounds of these school houses.

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Few of greater and none of <sup>any</sup> equal number of population of 23,000 people have a lower per cent of criminal or pauper classes and none a higher per cent of intelligent, industrious and moral people.

To the farmer or home seeker desiring to make a permanent home there cannot be found a more genial climate, a grander soil, a fairer land than tendered you here, and we are bold to make this assertion that a six square mile township in this county is capable of producing more bushels of grain, more bushels of corn, more pounds of pork and beef and more wagon loads of vegetables than half of all the counties east of the Alleghany mountains with average now is the end yet reached in the development of this great agricultural section.

Des Moines the county seat is located a little northeast of the center and in 1881 it became an incorporated city. It is situated on the line of the Illinois Central and the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha railways, 187 miles northwest of Des Moines, 487 miles from Chicago, 247 miles from St. Paul and 121 miles from Omaha.

In 1870 its population numbered 152; in 1880, 1835; in 1890, 4,036:



and the last census 1895 it had increased to 5.046 and the ratio of increase moves steadily upward made up of an energetic, progressive, prosperous and happy people.

Few if any cities of equal size covering an area of one thousand acres is builded better. Commanding blocks built of brick and stone on wide well kept streets adorn the business portion, surrounded by elegant homes made more so in season by the taste and refinement displayed for beautiful lawns and exquisite flowers.

From its early inception LeMau has been noted for its educational advantages, and here can be found one of the best school systems in the state. There are three fine and imposing brick structures, surrounded by beautiful grounds, adorned with trees, that have an aggregate value of \$50,000. In these schools are taught 1,600 children by 24 able and competent teachers whose average wages are \$12,000. annually.

Situated on a large and delightful campus ground is the Normal School building built of brick and stone, an imposing structure, a monument to the organizers and builders and a credit to the city. This property is valued at \$50,000, and was offered to the state for the consideration of one dollar if it would establish and conduct a State Normal School at this point, and it may be accepted yet.

The building is supplied with ample fire protection and has all the modern





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conveniences necessary for school purposes. The capacity of the school is 400 students, is well patronized not only by our own people but those from distant places. The several professors in this institution are men and women of the highest character and talent, splendid educators, and their work and teachings is shown by the betterment of those who have been under their influence.

In addition to these, there is one parochial school, ably conducted, that has a regular and large attendance of intelligent children.

The spiritual welfare is no less an important factor of its people in education, character and morality than the schools. These influences and teachings are promulgated from the pulpits of the Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopal, Baptist, Free Baptist, Lutheran, German Methodist, German Catholic and German Evangelical churches, all of which have a large following. Some of these edifices are improving in design and structure and interiors handsome, while the others not so pretentious are no discredit to their denominations. Banging the flag of our nation and crying as they may be the Salvation Army with its little band of faithful followers are adding new recruits to their number from the rank and file assembled on the street corners who listen to their exhortations to become better men and better women and to elevate the home to higher and more ennobling influences. Now is this all for the enlightenment and betterment of its people. The city owns a good brick structure in which there is a splendid library of 5,000.





volume besides newspapers and magazines. The library is open day and evening is free in books and to all who come. That we are a reading people is demonstrated by its 11,000 patrons during the past year.

LeMare has the largest system of water works of any city of its size in the state. It has over twenty miles of mains. At the pumping station the water is taken from a depth of eighty feet by sixty drive wells, which insures to the consumer water of the best and purest quality and without limit. Connected with this plant is the arc and electric light system which is generously used on all streets of the city as well as for commercial and private residences. There is no city better lighted the night through than this. This plant is valued at \$150,000.

In addition to this is a large and well equipped gas plant of sufficient capacity to meet the demands of a city twice its present size, even if it was used for street lighting purposes. Strictly speaking there is two plants combined in one for the manufacture of gas by coal and the other from oil and water. There are many consumers both for light and cooking purposes. This property has a value of \$35,000.

The city has an efficient and well equipped fire department, its members being paid a certain amount for their presence at each alarm of fire.

There is a splendid sewerage system to meet all present wants, which has been constructed at comparatively small cost.

LeMare boasts of having the largest and finest roller flouring mill in the



state. Its capacity is 550 barrels per day and seven cars of chopped and other feed. Their purchases during the past year was of wheat 700,000 bushels; corn 500,000; <sup>bushels</sup> oats 200,000 bushels and rye 25,000 bushels. There is one other roller flouring mill not so extensive, with a capacity of 200 barrels per day and five cars of feed. They have used for milling purposes 156,000 Bushels of wheat.

Much of the product in flour of these two mills is shipped in 140 pound sacks direct to foreign countries principally London. although the best grade of flour is retained for our home markets.

The value of these two properties is \$210,000.

These mills form a splendid market for the surplus grain and seed raised in the county, and are distributor of many thousands of dollars annually among our farmers.

Our representation in factories are meagre. There is one large and well equipped blank book and bindery; one well fitted factory that has but few equals in mass of goods made; one foundry and machine shop; one creamery that does an extensive business, and one brick and tile works.

With all the surroundings of location, transportation facilities of the best, and an energetic people to help there is no reason why any kind of a factory at Le Mars would not prove a success and be a paying investment to the promoters.

There are four banks with a capital of \$300,000. A large and splendid opera house, the best of hotels, the press represented by four well conducted newspapers, all the secret and social orders that have a large following.





representative business men, in fact, all the advantages that go to (20)  
make up an ideal city and county.

We are reached in every direction by telegraph and telephone lines and the hand of good will and fellowship is never withheld from the stranger who comes with good motives to the gateway of Plymouth County.





Pioneer days in Plymouth County,  
stories by C.M.Hilliker, in LeMars  
Sentinel, March 6, 1914. and Dec.  
1913.

SENTINEL--LE MARS

NOV 7 - 1920

#### FRED STATTER IS DEAD.

Was Member of Colony Which Settled  
Here in 1879.

Word has been received of the death of Fred Statter, which occurred at the home of his son, A. F. Statter, in Los Angeles, Calif., on Thursday. George Frederick Statter was born at Knowsley, Lancashire, England, June 27, 1848. He was married to Isabella Johnson, November 27, 1869. Besides his widow four sons survive, A. F. Statter, of Los Angeles, Calif., Dr. G. P. Statter, Humphrey and F. J. Statter, of Sioux City. Fred Statter was one of the original English colony that settled in Plymouth county at the beginning of the eighties. He came to Le Mars in 1879 and bought a large farm near where Duorn and Kingsley were subsequently built. A few years later he moved to Sioux City and conducted a livery business for many years. For the past few years Mr. and Mrs. Statter have spent most of their time in England and on the Pacific coast. Mr. Statter was a great horseman and had a wide reputation and his services as judge at shows and races were called into requisition all over the country.













